



THE REVOLUTION IN POLAND

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sential to work *with* rather than *against* England.

Concerning the relationship of Russia to a federation of European States, the problem is somewhat simpler than in the case of the British Isles. As a matter of fact, as long as Sovietism is the established form of Russian government, no real problem whatsoever exists. Acting upon principles as it now conceives them, the Soviet régime could hardly be expected to link itself with a group of nations fundamentally opposed to the tenets of communism. Moreover, since federal Europe would certainly not favor the extermination of capitalism, Russia would thus find another vital reason for the refusal of its active participation in the new Europe. It is also frequently asserted that the future of Russia lies to the east rather than to the west. In other words, the policy of Europeanizing Russia initiated by Peter the Great will in time be entirely abandoned. Industrially and socially, Russian interests will thus be stressed in the East.

However, although the exclusion of Russia in the United States of Europe seems to be mutually desired both by Russia itself and the adherents of the pan-European idea, nevertheless, as in the case of England, it will be necessary for the European union to assume an amicable and co-operative attitude toward the former subjects of the Czar.

With regard to the matter of European colonies outside of Europe, the question naturally arises whether or not such colonies should be included in any European federal organization. Those opposed to such inclusion advance very much the same arguments as in the case of Great Britain, viz, that the colonies are outside of Europe, that their size is too great, that they would tend to stir up unnecessary difficulties, and that they would disturb European harmony. The Pan European Union, however, sees the problem in a somewhat different light. Pointing out that most of the European colonies are situated in Africa, and that they are not scattered all over the globe, as in the case of England, this society is inclined to favor their admission to federal Europe. Such colonies, it is asserted, might be ad-

mitted to the European union as full-fledged States, as Territories, or as local self-governing units. The membership of the colonies in the European confederation is defended especially on the ground of industrial and economic necessity for Europe.

Whether or not the idea of a confederation of European States will ever be realized, no one can accurately foretell. Certainly it represent a magnificent aspiration—a world hope as well as a European hope. It will be the forerunner of permanent peace, the undisputed birthright of every human being. To be sure, there are the skeptics, who would remind us that the spirit may be willing, but that the human flesh is ever weak. To them, all that we can say is that the same difficulties beset our own American forefathers in their struggles for an American Union, and that, furthermore, even within memory of living man, the unification of Italy and the liberation of Ireland, once phantastic dreams, have become reality. In the words of Ex-Premier Nitti, "Times are changing. . . . Some things are happening today which in the days of my youth would have been relegated to the Arabian Nights fairy-tale class. . . . French, Italian, German unity is proof that even hatreds and passions that dominated for centuries and that seemed unconquerable may be dissolved and washed away."

THE REVOLUTION IN POLAND

By H. CH. G. F. VAN DER MANDERE,
General Secretary Netherlands League of
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THE observations made in the June number of this organ with reference to the revolution in Poland require supplementing somewhat here and there, in order to obtain a more complete insight of the external and internal relations of the Polish Kingdom, restored since 1918 to its independence.

Independent Poland was, at the end of the eighteenth century, divided, by three partitions, between Prussia, Austria, and Russia; but, despite the fact of these partitions, politically and economically, having taken place with refined cruelty, the

three dominating countries did not succeed in the century and a quarter in killing the national sentiment of Poland. It seems, therefore, permissible to point out that the restoration of Polish independence must not be regarded exclusively, perhaps not even chiefly, as the righting of a historical wrong. It must be regarded especially as a political economic necessity, for the restoration in Europe of relations which had been wrongfully broken.

Russia indeed, arisen in the course of the eighteenth century, has not hitherto been able to divest itself of its typical Eastern cachet. Owing to its annexation of a part of Poland, Russia acquired its share in direct European politics, becoming one of the great European powers, with all the inevitable appurtenances of such. Not small, therefore, is the number of those who, in the restoration of Poland's independence, perceive that Poland must serve at one and the same time to separate and to bind eastern and western Europe. To separate in order to prevent too elementary conflicts; to bind in order to insure co-operation, especially in economic matters.

It follows directly thence that Poland's position, both geographically and politically, is an extremely difficult one. Nor should it be lost sight of in this connection that Poland can only in the south, where she needs them least, lay claim to natural frontiers. To the south, Poland is bounded by Czechoslovakia and Rumania, two States with whom she lives in perfect harmony and from whom no attempt to assail Polish independence need be expected. But to the east, towards Russia, and to the west, towards Germany, the frontiers are quite open, artificial and absolutely unprotected.

The hostile attitude frequently taken by Germany towards Poland has been attributed solely to the fact that the League of Nations Council awarded half of Upper Silesia, with rich coal mines, to Poland. The German grievance is, however, rooted in the whole Treaty of Versailles, in so far as the latter again restores to the old rightful Polish owner regions which Prussia appropriated hardly a century ago in a perfectly unlawful manner. In which connection it should not be forgotten that President Wilson pleaded for independent Poland a free

outlet to the sea, whereas only the use of Dantzig, raised to a free town, has been allotted to Poland—this, too, in a manner far less liberal than the peace treaty had intended.

The difficulties experienced by Poland with Russia have been attributed solely to territorial causes, whereas the cause is far more likely to lie in the fact that Russia sees no chance of carrying bolshevism through Poland to the rest of western Europe. Vilna is undoubtedly a bone of contention, dividing Poland and the adjacent Lithuania, so closely allied in history. A Polish general, shortly after the Russians had evacuated Vilna, occupied this town, thereby depriving Lithuania of Vilna, to whom, however, it did not ethnographically belong. It is, nevertheless, a misconception to assume that Poland thereby acted *in opposition to a recommendation of the Council of the League of Nations*. The latter had merely requested both parties to refrain from taking active steps. It must be admitted that Poland did not act in accordance therewith. The Council of the League of Nations did not, however, pronounce a decision with regard to the awarding of Vilna until 1925, and this decision fully confirmed the Polish claims. One should not, moreover, lose sight of the fact that Lithuania had already indemnified itself in anticipation, at least quite as unlawfully, by taking possession of Memel, which was indeed protected by the Treaty of Versailles.

It is quite comprehensible that the casual observer, traveling in Poland and perceiving the fairly large military force under arms there, should suspect the country of an aggressive foreign policy. Nothing is less true. Poland lies to the east and the west, towards Russia and Germany, respectively, absolutely open. It is not afraid of the attack of *one* of these powers. In 1920 Russia tried such an attack. The Red army penetrated to the walls of Warsaw, which does not lie so many hours' march from the present Prussian frontier. The Poles, thanks to the technical aid of a French delegation, were enabled to parry the blow, which would otherwise have affected the whole of Europe. In front of Warsaw, Russia was checked and shortly afterwards forced to retire across her own frontiers.

On March 17, 1921, the Treaty of Riga was concluded, definitively regulating the frontier between Russia and Poland and establishing their mutual relations. These relations, though by no means of a friendly nature, are at all events good, and the visit lately paid by the Russian National Commissary to Warsaw furnished proof thereof.

Indeed anyone familiar with the economic situation of Poland must at once admit that there can be no advantage whatsoever for this country in aggressive action towards foreign countries. In order to restore its shaken credit and to develop its industries, Poland needs, perhaps more than any other country in Europe, the confidence of the financial world. It must rehabilitate itself, financially and economically, and any war, even if such were to be waged so-called successfully, would not indeed tend thereto. Poland's policy has not, therefore, hitherto been aggressive.

Scarcely had Poland become independent when she saw herself surrounded by enemies. In the extreme east by the Ukraine, who tried to rob her of Lvov; further, at nearly every vulnerable point of her frontiers, by natural foes, who grudged her independence. Poland naturally resisted this, waging the difficult fight with skill, and anyone hearing nowadays how the Polish women—yea, even the Polish children—thereby offered resistance, cannot, despite all his pacifistic inclinations, have anything but respect for all these people, who did what they conceived to be their duty.

Poland, however, raised no objections in 1925, when the Treaty of Locarno was about to be concluded, as it, perhaps, might have done. Paris was closely allied to Poland, and had the latter wished to see this special alliance retained, it may be that nothing would have come of France's adhesion to Locarno. However much Poland may have desired a permanent seat in the Council of the League of Nations, she, in contrast with Brazil and also, to some extent, with Spain, did nothing to hinder the work of the Council.

Is it surprising that a country like Poland—devastated for the most part during the war, built up on three economic systems which were imposed on it by the three former dominating powers, afflicted

by financial and economic difficulties—should find itself in anything but a flourishing state? The Polish mark, the original currency, speedily dropped to the level of the Austrian crown and the German mark.

Minister-President Grabski introduced in 1924 and 1925 the new currency unit, the zloty, thanks to which the financial equilibrium was soon restored. But bad harvests, internal difficulties, and, last but not least, the tariff war entered upon with Germany made a bad situation worse. Hence the serious unemployment prevailing in Poland, the constant urging to economy in the state budget, and also the question arising as to whether the large army needed by Poland for its political independence is not meanwhile the cause of its economic ruin. One moves here, however, in a vicious circle. Poland needs money for its restoration; the foreign markets will not trust Poland until it has restored itself.

In this light Pilsudski's undoubtedly revolutionary attack must be viewed. Pilsudski saw the State being governed by incompetents and was unable to discern in the parliamentary system sufficient force to establish Poland on a better basis. Is it surprising that this parliamentary system, notable in restored Poland for the defects which are also in other countries, did not endow him with sufficient confidence for the task of reconstruction? However this may be, Pilsudski's attack should be regarded as an isolated fact. There are numerous countries in Europe which pass through similar periods, in which one, nevertheless, does not lose confidence. The seven years of Polish independence, now passed, may have been characterized by certain claims of Polish nationalists, not, however, supported by the mass of the people, but they have, on the other hand, furnished nothing to create the opinion that Poland is inclined, or even willing, to depart from the regular course the State should follow. The development of a country such as Poland, in the present difficult financial and economic circumstances, can only take place gradually, and in this connection one should take into account the historical evils and errors by which the country is burdened.